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Letter, Virginia Brainard to Dudley and Merl Brainard [December 1940]

Virginia Brainard

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Dec., 1940



Wm. S. CADDW, menasha

HOTEL ROOSEVELT

Cedar Rapids · Iowa

Friday

Dear Mother and Daddy,

I thought of all of you so much yesterday even though you weren't giving thanks with me. Being here in Virginia's home has made me homesick for my own. I can hardly wait until Christmas. It's ^{been} a long stretch, these past three months. I miss all of you an awful lot, especially right now when I have a little time to sit down and relax. Not much time, though. I brought all my books with me and have been trying to get some studying in. I wanted to get a little rest but there's just "no rest for the weary." Everytime I have a spare minute there are a hundred things that need doing.

And my work! I'm so terribly worried about it that it follows me around all the time. It's just torture. Finals are closing in on me in just two more weeks and I've been going thru three horrible periods of night mares. I've never been in such a horrible mental state in all my life. I break out in cold sweat. I've read about exams affecting people like that but I never dreamed it'd get me, too. There's nothing worse than this.

I guess I crached up the other day. I've averaged four hours of sleep every night since the first of October. One night a week ago I got $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours of sleep and only five hours the next night. I went to bed at last Monday night about 1:00 and they couldn't get me up the next morning. I was scared so I went to the hospital. I'm all right now. All I want is to be able to keep going until the end of the quarter. After that I won't be in a condition to care what happens. — Even if I flunk Chemistry. Edward says it's no disgrace to flunk anything here but if I flunk Chemistry I think I won't come back next quarter. Honestly and truly, I'm not just talking. I've never flunked anything in all my life and I think I'll lose my mind if I flunk Chem. ~~The~~ The one and only thing that makes me wish the work was lighter is missing Helen Jepson like I did a week ago because I ~~couldn't~~ take anything out from Chem, I've also ruined the U.S. Marine Band, Raymond Clapper, McClellan Barclay. When it comes to that I don't know if education is worth it but there's no help for it.

I've also made a rather big decision during this past month. I've been thinking about sororities quite a bit and I've decided that I don't want to join any ~~one~~ or even go out for rushing until at least next year — and probably not at all. I'm so glad I can make this decision because it will make the financial load



Wm. S. CROOK, manager

HOTEL ROOSEVELT

Cedar Rapids · Iowa

much easier. I know that if I really wanted to join a sorority you'd sacrifice a lot just for that and I'm afraid I'd be tempted to take it. So I'm glad I can say I don't want it now and probably not at all. I know there are many advantages ~~and~~ a sorority can give a girl but I don't believe they offer anything I can't get through down life and the drawbacks seem to me to be quite glaring. But perhaps I've seen only that side. However, this is the way I feel about it. ~~The~~ By far the most important thing to me now is to develop myself and my interests along the lines we wrote about several weeks ago and to develop my work into just what I want it to be. And I want to fight that problem all myself and be able to lick it without the backing of any sorority or any other organized group behind me and showing me along. I think I have to do it for myself or it won't mean a thing to me. I think that in my case dependence upon an outside group to make my openings for me would be very bad because I'd have too much of a tendency to be a parasite. And nothing is really worth doing unless I do it for myself and there is no reward or joy in ~~success~~ success unless I've fought for it myself so I want my independence. This

is my battle and I want to fight it out to the finish myself. I want to be an individual and a darn good student first. The rest can wait.

Then there are other little things, such as sorority goes not standing for the same things I stand for & the things you've taught me. And I love democracy. I like to do my own doing without having everything arranged for me by a Pledge Social Chairman with the "most eligible" ~~men~~ men on the campus. — always those in only one or two accepted fraternities. And I'd rather date non-frat men — "barbs" — than any other class of fellows. The really finest best men I've met so far ~~have~~ are non-frat men. There are a lot of little things. We'll have a long talk about it Christmas. I can hardly wait to get home but I dread the end of this quarter. I want you to be happy and glad that you could give all this to me and I don't know what's going to happen.

I'm having a nice ~~set~~ quiet time here in Cedar Rapids. The Pickers are lovely people. I'm very thankful that there aren't any parties. We've been trying to study. This afternoon we went shopping and I got my overshoes. They were the last pair in town. I paid \$2.49 for them and in Ames they cost \$3.88. I could not find a hat anywhere! I'm so disgusted so I've decided to quit trying. Couldn't you have my old green snap brim blocked and cleaned and send it to me? I like it better than anything I've seen and it looks best on me I know. It would be a very inexpensive way of solving the hat problem.



Wm. S. CADOW, manager

HOTEL ROOSEVELT

Cedar Rapids · Iowa

And I also bought a Christmas present from you to me! Remember I asked for a pair of shoes? Well, cross it off the list cause I bought them this afternoon. I needed them pretty badly or I wouldn't have sacrificed my hat for them. I guess that was the real reason I finally decided not to get one at all. I needed shoes much worse. They were only \$4.00 and are a good sensible pair. So I'd sure love it if you'd make me a present of the four bucks right now. It kinda takes the edge of Christmas but I sure needed them now. Merry Christmas!

I hope I can hold out until Christmas. Had used to haul me out for worrying so over the paper but I've never in all my life worried the way I am now. Its agonizing.

Saturday

Please don't give me much of a Christmas this year. I get my Christmas present every day I'm at Iowa State. And I don't want you to spend much money. I've decided to let my hat go entirely. I've got my shoes so cross them off the list, too.

There is another item of expense that's just come up. I have a board bill of \$5.45 that's accumulated since September. I was

finer several times when I had to have
my checks cashed through the college. I had
to have some extra meals and trays. That
seems an awful lot. I wish I could pay
it out of my allowance. But I'll pay half
of it and gladly because it's my fault.
I wish I could afford all of it but I can't —
especially with Christmas in three weeks.

Only three more weeks and then
I'll be home. ~~I don't~~ I'd much rather have
tea than a luncheon. It would be much
easier for you and far less expensive, just
something simple cause we'll all be eating
a lot of rice ^{or} food then. Did I tell you that I
weigh 133 lbs now? I can still stand 10 more
pounds but I'm due to lose from now
until Christmas.

This afternoon the Richters have
gone downtown to shop some more. I'm
all alone so I'm planning on a good
long afternoon of Chemistry. I have a
lab. test Tuesday and a big lecture test
Wednesday. I've already quit eating
till it's all over. I must stop now and
get to work. We leave for Ames on the
4:00 train tomorrow and get in about
6:50. The roads are terrible so I'm glad
we're going by train. Hope I find some
mail from you when I get back —

just checked the board bills again
and we missed out on paying
for the first few days of school. That's
what we're charged for. It's due
this Wednesday, Dec. 4.

All my love —
Virginia